



## Tell Me About a Time When...

by Carole Martin  
Monster Contributing Writer

As soon as you hear the words, "**Tell me about a time when...**," you should be aware that your interviewer is probably using a behavioral interviewing technique.

This technique uses your past experiences and behaviors as an indicator of your future success. In other words, if you can demonstrate through examples that you accomplished something before, there is a tendency for the interviewer to believe you may do it again.

### Be Specific

Sometimes it is difficult to come up with a specific illustration, because the situation, such as managing multiple tasks at once, occurs regularly in your line of work.

For example, a candidate had worked in the publishing business for seven years. When she was asked, "Tell me about a time when you had to juggle priorities to meet a deadline," she almost laughed out loud.

"Juggling priorities is a way of life in the publishing business," she answered. "There's not a day when I don't have to work under that kind of pressure."

Her interviewer persisted, asking for specific examples of this type of demand.

"I could tell you five incidents that happened this week alone," the candidate replied. "I had one person on the phone, received three emails with project changes, and I had two deadlines to meet. And that was only on Monday."

In this scenario, the interviewer is seeking information about how the candidate handles priorities and deadlines, how she works under pressure and how flexible she is.

for pulling off the changes and meeting the tight deadline."

### Your Stories

Preparing your stories is one of the most beneficial exercises you can do to become focused before your interview. If you say you're good at something, prove it with a story. You should be able to back up anything you say on your resume or in an interview with a story or an example of how you have soared in a sticky situation.

### Potential Questions

The exact questions that might be asked are virtually limitless. But here are a few examples of the types that you could face:

- Tell me about a time when you were working with someone who wasn't pulling their weight, and they had a different value system than yours. How did you deal with this person?
- Tell me about a time when you failed. What happened, and how did you recover.
- Tell me about a time when you succeeded. Give a specific example.